

Saakashvili's Roses Not Yet Wilted in U.S. Visit

by William Jones

The first visit to the United States by the newly elected President of the Republic of Georgia, Mikhail Saakashvili, was for him, as he said, "like coming home." The new President, brought to power in Georgia in a U.S.-supported move against old Soviet apparatchik and Gorbachev protégé Eduard Shevardnadze, was given a royal welcome to Washington. His friend and mentor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, introduced him at a public forum at the John Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies on Feb. 25. Saakashvili had a warm Oval Office meeting with President Bush on Feb. 26. He brought in his entourage nearly his entire cabinet, all with close ties to leading American political circles.

Saakashvili, a graduate of Columbia University in New York and with a graduate degree from George Washington University in Washington, D.C., is definitely no stranger to these parts. As a matter of fact, his career has been carefully cultivated since he was a student by some of Washington's most influential political figures. Since he graduated from Columbia University Law School in 1994, some of the nation's top geopoliticians—like that madman from the Carter years, Brzezinski—have had a long time to observe this young Georgian political figure.

Indeed, the "Rose Revolution" which brought Saakashvili to power—so named by the fact that the oppositionists in the Georgian parliament met the military called out by Shevardnadze to evacuate them, with each oppositionist carrying a rose—was effectively choreographed through the use of funding from George Soros's Open Society Foundation. In fact, the Open Society Foundation brought in operatives from the successful overthrow of Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic by the opposition Otpor, to train the Georgian opposition. The Open Society Foundation has created a veritable "school for agitators" capable of dealing with any "recalcitrant" regimes which are not prepared to play according to the "Washington consensus" rules dictated through Soros and his cronies.

'Finlandization' of Georgia?

The outlines of the geopolitical game being played in the Georgian Republic has been quite clearly outlined by Brzezinski in one of his recent geopolitical treatises, *The Global Chessboard*. Like Halford Mackinder before him, Brzezinski sees Central Asia as the battlefield in which U.S. financial and oil interests have to insert a wedge into the growing Russian-Chinese-Indian cooperation. As Brzezinski himself bluntly

acknowledged in his book: "To put it in a terminology that hearkens back to the more brutal age of ancient empires, the three grand imperatives of imperial geostrategy are to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together."

In his comments at SAIS, Brzezinski urged Saakashvili to follow the model of Finland during the Cold War: That is, maintain cordial relations with Russia, but remain doggedly independent. Brzezinski also urged Saakashvili that it was important for Georgia to maintain some semblance of "constitutionality," warning, perhaps somewhat nervously, that the support which had been carefully created for Saakashvili could quickly dissipate if he moved too abruptly to consolidate himself in power. This in the midst of threats being made by Saakashvili in Tbilisi, against secessionist areas and his moves to crack down on the domestic media. In Washington, however, he was all smiles and good-will. While Brzezinski views the Georgia developments as the first "domino" to fall in his Central Asian "New Great Game," he is also aware that things can quickly backfire.

The World Bank loan promised Saakashvili—and, in an extraordinary move, applicable prior to any agreement between the International Monetary Fund and the Georgian Republic—may keep the new President "pliable," at least for the time being. And then the promise of the Caspian pipelines through Georgia, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhhan line or the more ethereal Baku-Tbilisi-Batumi line preferred by Saakashvili, may offer some hope for the future.

But given the existence of secessionist areas like South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Adjara, and the growing suspicion in Russian political circles that the new U.S. Central Asia policy is aimed at containment of Russia, which continues to have troops in Georgia and is sympathetic with some of the dissident circles, may make the role of "satrap" more difficult than it now seems with U.S. assistance flowing to the new government. Even without the Great Game being played, the Caucasus has always been something of a rough neighborhood. Many observers have commented that Saakashvili has, nevertheless, handled the situation relatively well, and his four-hour meeting with the Russian President in Moscow seems to have waylaid fears of any confrontational approach on his part. That is not the case with the Brzezinski and the Cheney neo-conservatives, however. As we have seen with utmost clarity in their "splendid little war" in Iraq, their approach has been viscerally confrontational. Saakashvili may be thankful for the doors and the spigots being opened for him in Washington by his alleged "friends," but it is not quite clear that the new Georgian government are really prepared to serve as the front-line soldiers in the geopolitical wars being fomented by Brzezinski and the neo-cons. If not, they must begin some serious "weeding" in their garden, if the "roses" are not to begin wilting in a new bloody geopolitical clash in the Caucasus.